

[駒沢女子短期大学 研究紀要 第28号 P.65~77 1995]

Early English Education : Survey of Teachers and Parents Attitude Towards Picture Books (1)

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Introduction

As the 21st century approaches amidst the background of an “Age of Internationalization” the need of the radical change in foreign language education is now under debate: namely the introduction of English into Japanese public elementary schools.

The introduction of English into elementary school is closely related with International Understanding Education. Deciding what materials based on Intercultural Education are appropriate for teaching English presents a considerable challenge.

In this paper, I'd like to discuss picture books which have the following advantages as teaching materials for English education, and to make clear that picture books can be of practical use.

- Foreign picture books can be used at kindergarten, elementary schools and at home.
- Children can foster an interest in foreign cultures and lives through foreign picture books. Therefore the books are useful as a means of Intercultural Education (which is also one of the aims of teaching English).

Our project team (of the picture book study meeting) conducted a survey of kindergarten teachers, elementary school teachers and parents (mostly mothers) who have young children about picture books.

In this paper I present the results of the survey. I will focus on how suitable the parents and teachers thought picture books are as a method of instruction. I will also draw conclusions about their attitudes towards picture books in general.

Outline of survey

Purpose

To define the degree of recognition and depth of understanding that exists concerning the use of picture books as English teaching materials. To be accomplished by conducting a survey of kindergarten teachers, elementary teachers, and parents with young children.

Implementation

- Survey conducted November 1992

- Subjects are teachers (kindergarten and elementary school) and parents in Tokyo
- 661 people surveyed

Kindergarten teachers: 147

Elementary school teachers: 211

Parents: 303

- Age of those surveyed:

Teachers in their 20's 69

...30's 120

...40's 116

...50's 45

Parents in their teens 1

...20's 14

...30's 213

...40's 75

...50's 1

Results

About devices used in picture books

1. How do kindergarten and elementary school teachers use picture books in their classes?

Table 1 gives a comparison.

TABLE 1

	Reading	Kamishibai	Making Picture Books	Dramatization	Audio-Visual	Others	No Answer	Total
Kindergarten teachers	97.1 (135)	12.9 (18)	15.8 (22)	43.9 (61)	23.0 (32)	4.3 (6)	2.2 (3)	199.3 (277)
Elementary school teachers	93.8 (198)	17.1 (36)	21.8 (46)	26.1 (55)	14.7 (31)	2.8 (6)	2.4 (5)	178.7 (377)
Total	95.1 (333)	15.4 (54)	19.4 (68)	33.1 (116)	18.0 (63)	3.4 (12)	2.3 (8)	186.9 (654)

TABLE 1 shows that the percentage of the teachers in both kindergarten and elementary schools reading picture books to the children is the highest. Kindergarten children have greater powers of expression than elementary school children, as shown in TABLE 1. Kindergarten teachers focus on adapting picture books into plays more so than their elementary counterparts. Apparently . The kindergarten teachers can afford to use their time more freely for the dramatization of picture books.

2. A Table of comparison between kindergarten and elementary school teachers; their preferences in choosing story text.

TABLE 2

	Warmhearted	Fun	Useful for Study	Repetition	Catchy Rhythem	Dialect and Jargon	Others	No Answer	Total
K.T.	87.1 (121)	69.8 (97)	6.5 (9)	87.1 (121)	89.9 (125)	29.5 (41)	2.2 (3)	0.0 (0)	371.9(517)
E.T.	74.9 (158)	82.0 (173)	15.2 (32)	48.8 (103)	74.4 (157)	31.8 (67)	3.3 (7)	0.0 (0)	330.3(697)
Total	79.7 (279)	77.1 (270)	11.7 (41)	64.0 (224)	80.6 (282)	30.9(108)	2.9 (10)	0.0 (0)	346.9(1214)

TABLE 2 shows that the percentage of the teachers in both kindergartens and elementary schools who believe the attractive stories in the picture books are useful for study is relatively low. The teachers have little awareness that the enjoyable, warm, and even unique stories can serve as good teaching materials.

3. A Table of comparison between the kindergarten and elementary school teachers: the intention that underlies choice of teaching materials.

TABLE 3

	Always	Fairly Often	With Equa Regularity	Seldom	Never	Unknown	No Answer	Total
K.T.	0.7 (1)	5.8 (8)	31.7 (44)	29.5 (41)	30.9 (43)	0.7 (1)	0.7 (1)	100.0 (139)
E.T.	2.4 (5)	16.6 (35)	35.1 (74)	27.5 (58)	17.5 (37)	0.9 (2)	0.0 (0)	100.0 (211)
Total	1.7 (6)	12.3 (43)	33.7 (118)	28.3 (99)	22.9 (80)	0.9 (3)	0.2 (1)	100.0 (350)

Awareness of the practical application of the picture books as teaching materials is very low among the kindergarten and elementary school teachers.

4. A Table juxtaposing teachers ages with attitudes towards using picture books as teaching materials.

TABLE 4

	Always	Fairly Often	With Equal Regularity	Seldom	Never	Unknown	No Answer	Total
teens	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)
20's	1.4 (1)	10.1 (7)	33.3 (23)	24.6 (17)	29.0 (20)	1.4 (1)	0.0 (0)	100.0 (69)
30's	0.8 (1)	10.0 (12)	38.3 (46)	33.3 (40)	17.5 (21)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	100.0 (120)
40's	3.4 (4)	12.9 (15)	30.2 (35)	23.3 (27)	28.4 (33)	1.7 (2)	0.0 (0)	100.0 (116)
50's	0.0 (0)	20.0 (9)	31.1 (14)	33.3 (15)	13.3 (6)	0.0 (0)	2.2 (1)	100.0 (45)
Total	1.7 (6)	12.3 (43)	33.7 (118)	28.3 (99)	22.9 (80)	0.9 (3)	0.3 (1)	100.0 (350)

The lack of awareness about the potential use of picture books is low among teachers regardless of age.

5. A Table of home environment ; their preferences in choosing story text parent awareness of the need and the use of reading text.

TABLE 5

	Warmhearted	Fun	Useful for Study	Repetition	Catchy Rhythm	Dialect and Jargon	Others	No Answer	Total
0	100.0(1)	100.0(1)	100.0(1)	100.0(1)	0.0 (0)	100.0 (1)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	500.0(5)
under 20	78.7(37)	76.6(36)	27.7(13)	34.0(16)	55.3 (26)	19.1 (9)	6.4 (3)	0.0 (0)	297.9(140)
21~40	81.9(86)	82.9(87)	29.5(31)	41.9(44)	75.2 (79)	17.1 (18)	1.0 (1)	0.0 (0)	329.5(346)
over 41	78.7(118)	86.0(129)	22.7(34)	46.0(69)	73.3 (110)	21.3(32)	4.0 (6)	0.0 (0)	332.0(498)
Total	79.6(242)	83.2(253)	26.0(79)	42.8(130)	70.7 (215)	19.7 (60)	3.3 (10)	0.0 (0)	325.3(989)

Parents are aware that picture books are useful for study. The more books the parents own at home, the better understanding they promote about enjoyable stories and the unique expressions within them. We might say their awareness of the potential surpasses that of the teachers surveyed.

Understanding of foreign picture books

6. A Table of home environment: the familiarity with and receptivity of foreign picture books relative to the number of books owned.

TABLE 6

	Unequivocally True	Probably True	No Generalization Possible	Probably False	Absolutely False	Don't Know	No Answer	Total
0	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	100.0 (1)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	100.0(1)
under 20	0.0 (0)	14.9 (7)	29.8 (14)	40.4 (19)	8.5 (4)	6.4 (3)	0.0 (0)	100.0(47)
21~40	1.0 (1)	12.4 (13)	29.5 (31)	41.0 (43)	9.5 (10)	6.7 (7)	0.0 (0)	100.0(105)
over 40	2.3 (3)	6.0 (9)	24.0 (36)	45.3 (68)	20.7 (31)	2.0 (3)	0.0 (0)	100.0(150)
Total	1.3 (4)	9.5 (29)	27.0 (82)	42.8 (130)	14.8 (45)	4.3 (13)	0.0 (0)	99.7(303)

7. A Table of home environment: the recognition of devices used in picture books relative to the number of owned books

TABLE 7

	Unequivocally True	Probably True	No Generalization Possible	Probably False	Absolutely False	Don't Know	No Answer	Total
0	0.0 (0)	100.0 (1)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	100.0 (1)
under 20	2.1 (1)	34.0 (16)	51.1 (24)	4.3 (2)	0.0 (0)	8.5 (4)	0.0 (0)	100.0 (47)
21~41	4.8 (5)	41.9 (44)	32.4 (34)	9.5 (10)	0.0 (0)	11.4 (12)	0.0 (0)	100.0 (105)
over 41	9.3 (14)	46.0 (69)	37.3 (56)	2.0 (3)	0.0 (0)	5.3 (8)	0.0 (0)	100.0 (150)
Total	6.6 (20)	42.8 (130)	37.5 (114)	4.9 (15)	0.0 (0)	7.9 (24)	0.0 (0)	99.7 (303)

8. Table of comparison between kindergarten and elementary school teachers; the recognition of devices used in picture books relative to teachers' ages.

TABLE 8

	Unequivocally True	Probably True	No Generalization Possible	Probably False	Absolutely False	Don't Know	No Answer	Total
teens	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	100.0 (1)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	100.0 (1)
20's	0.0 (0)	71.4 (10)	14.3 (2)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	14.3 (2)	0.0 (0)	100.0 (14)
30's	6.6 (14)	43.2 (92)	39.0 (83)	4.2 (9)	0.0 (0)	7.0 (15)	0.0 (0)	100.0 (213)
40's	8.0 (6)	37.3 (28)	37.3 (28)	8.0 (6)	0.0 (0)	9.3 (7)	0.0 (0)	100.0 (75)
50's	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	00.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	100.0 (1)	0.0 (0)	100.0 (1)
Total	6.6 (20)	42.8 (130)	37.5 (114)	4.9 (15)	0.0 (0)	8.2 (25)	0.0 (0)	100.0 (304)

The more books owned at home the deeper the parents' understanding (cf. TABLE 5). The same tendency can be seen in the TABLE 7. TABLE 8 shows the number of the teachers who answered that picture books have devices, with the greatest concentration among teachers in their 20's.

9. A table of comparison between teachers; the familiarity with and receptivity of picture books.

TABLE 9

	Unequivocally True	Probably True	No Generalization Possible	Probably False	Absolutely False	Don't Know	No Answer	Total
K.T.	0.0 (0)	5.0 (7)	28.8 (40)	46.0 (64)	15.1 (21)	2.9 (4)	2.2 (3)	100.0 (139)
E.T.	0.0 (0)	6.2 (13)	28.0 (59)	44.1 (93)	18.5 (39)	1.9 (4)	1.4 (3)	100.0 (211)
Total	0.0 (0)	5.7 (20)	28.3 (99)	44.9 (157)	17.1 (60)	2.3 (8)	1.7 (6)	100.0 (350)

10. A Table of comparison between teachers: the recognition of devices used in picture books.

TABLE 10

	Unequivocally True	Probably True	No Generalization Possible	Probably False	Absolutely False	Don't Know	No Answer	Total
K.T.	2.9 (4)	41.0 (57)	45.3 (63)	2.9 (4)	0.0 (0)	5.8 (8)	2.2 (3)	100.0 (139)
E.T.	8.1 (17)	43.1 (91)	38.9 (82)	5.7 (12)	0.0 (0)	2.8 (6)	1.4 (3)	100.0 (211)
Total	6.0 (21)	42.3 (148)	41.4 (145)	4.6 (16)	0.0 (0)	4.0 (14)	1.7 (6)	100.0 (350)

This question allows us to quantify the degree of the teachers' understanding. Table 9 shows that the number of teachers who show familiarity with picture books is 62%. There is little difference between kindergarten and elementary school teachers.

TABLE 10 shows whether or not teachers recognize the devices used in outstanding picture books. Comparison of TABLE 9 and TABLE 10 shows the teachers recognition of the devices in picture books is definitely lower.

TABLE 10 also shows that the number of the elementary school teachers who recognize the use of devices in picture books is slightly greater than that of kindergarten teachers.

11. A table of comparison between teachers: the awareness of the potential of picture books in Intercultural Education.

TABLE 11

	Unequivocally True	Probably True	No Generalization Possible	Probably False	Absolutely False	Don't Know	No Answer	Total
K.T.	0.7 (1)	32.4 (45)	33.8 (47)	25.2 (35)	1.4 (2)	4.3 (6)	2.2 (3)	100.0 (139)
E.T.	6.2 (13)	48.8 (103)	28.0 (59)	13.3 (28)	0.0 (0)	2.4 (5)	1.4 (3)	100.0 (211)
Total	4.0 (14)	42.3 (148)	30.3 (106)	18.0 (63)	0.6 (2)	3.1 (11)	1.7 (6)	100.0 (353)

12. A Table of comparison between teachers: the awareness of picture books in Intercultural Education relative to teachers' ages .

TABLE 12

	Unequivocally True	Probably True	No Generalization Possible	Probably False	Absolutely False	Don't Know	No Answer	Total
teens	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	100.0 (1)
20's	5.8 (4)	27.5 (19)	33.3 (23)	24.6 (17)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	100.0 (14)
30's	2.5 (3)	36.7 (44)	38.3 (46)	15.8 (19)	2.3 (5)	2.8 (6)	0.0 (0)	100.0 (213)
40's	5.2 (6)	50.9 (59)	23.3 (27)	17.2 (20)	4.0 (3)	1.3 (1)	0.0 (0)	100.0 (75)
50's	2.2 (1)	57.8 (26)	22.2 (10)	15.6 (7)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	100.0 (1)
Total	4.0 (14)	42.3 (148)	30.3 (106)	18.0 (63)	2.6 (8)	2.3 (7)	0.0 (0)	100.0 (304)

13. A Table of home environment: the awareness of potential of picture books in Intercultural Education relative to parents' ages .

TABLE 13

	Unequivocally True	Probably True	No Generalization Possible	Probably False	Absolutely False	Don't Know	No Answer	Total
teens	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	100.0 (1)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	100.0 (1)
20's	0.0 (0)	42.9 (6)	28.6 (4)	28.6 (4)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	100.0 (14)
30's	2.3 (5)	34.7 (74)	33.8 (72)	23.9 (51)	2.3 (5)	2.8 (6)	0.0 (0)	100.0 (213)
40's	6.7 (5)	30.7 (23)	28.0 (21)	29.3 (22)	4.0 (3)	1.3 (1)	0.0 (0)	100.0 (75)
50's	0.0 (0)	100.0 (1)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	100.0 (1)
Total	3.3 (10)	34.2 (104)	31.9 (97)	25.7 (78)	2.6 (8)	2.3 (7)	0.0 (0)	100.0 (304)

About 46 % of teachers are aware of picture books as a medium for students to learn about foreign cultures. 36.5 % of the parents are similarly aware. TABLE 12 shows that older teachers are more aware in this respect than younger teachers. It seems that the longer the career the deeper the recognition of the importance of Intercultural Education and Education of Internationalization. However, the younger the parent the greater the sense of internationalization and recognition of its importance. Thus parents are opposite teachers in this regard.

Conclusion

In this paper, I reported the results of a survey concerning the knowledge and awareness of picture books as a medium of instruction among three different groups: kindergarten teachers, elementary school teachers, and parents. The results of this survey answers some questions, but raises others. Thus this conclusion can only be tentative, and its veracity will have to be tested further.

Analysis of results

1) Prevalence of teacher-centered teaching methods

The tendency toward teacher-centered-teaching is noted in teaching with picture books. The percentage of teachers in both kindergartens and elementary schools reading a picture book in the class is the highest among the teaching devices with picture books. However the teachers who have the children make "Kamishibai", a play or a drama, or have them make their own picture books using the books themselves as teaching materials, are few. In other words, student-centered teaching methods are under-utilized. The teacher-centered method often supplants the student-centered one.

2) Lack of awareness of the potential of picture books as a medium of instruction

Since 62 % of the teachers answered that they have familiarity with picture books, there is the possibility that picture books be used for instruction. On the other hand, the teachers' and parents' low degree of understanding about the devices and the unique portrayals seen in foreign picture books tells us that the concept of picture books as a medium of instruction is as yet unrealized. Promotion of picture books as something other than entertainment should help to increase awareness and foster the idea that they can be effective tools of instruction.

APPENDIX

A QUESTIONNAIRE ABOUT PICTURE BOOKS

Picture books provide the sustenance for a child's development. And when giving guidance and attention to our children no small amount of consideration must be given to the stage of growth of the child. With this in mind, we would ask you to complete the following questionnaire regarding your influence and value using picture books in kindergarten, grade school and at home. The data gathered from this survey will help us to study the value of using picture books for educational purposes. This survey was created by kindergarten and elementary school teachers from the Tokyo area in Japan.

It is not necessary to name your school or the persons completing this survey. A quick response will be appreciated. We thank you in advance for your cooperation.

HOW TO ANSWER

Follow these instructions and write the number of your answer in the boxes on the right.

Choose no more than three answers.

- | | | |
|---------------|---------------------|-----------------|
| 1) Dictionary | 2) Illustrated text | 3) Picture book |
| 4) Newspaper | 5) Other | |

If your answer is not among the choices, you may write the appropriate answer in the parentheses.

MISCELLANEOUS

Please draw your answers from relevant experiences in the last year only.

[1] How many damaged picture books must be replaced in the course of a year? Please exclude comic books or comic type magazines from your definition of this term.

- | | | | |
|------|-------------|-----------|-------------|
| 1) 0 | 2) Under 50 | 3) 51-100 | 4) Over 100 |
|------|-------------|-----------|-------------|

[2] How many picture books are there from other countries in the school library?

- | | | | |
|------------|--------------|------------|------------|
| 1) 0 | 2) Under 100 | 3) 101-200 | 4) 201-300 |
| 5) 301-500 | 6) Over 500 | | |

READING ENVIRONMENT, OPINIONS ABOUT PICTURE BOOKS, GUIDANCE

(You may choose as many answers as you like for these questions)

[3] What sort of environment is created to generate for reading picture books?

- 1) A special reading corner just for picture books

- 2) Mixed in the classroom library corner
- 3) Expand the number of picture books in the school library
- 4) Display posters and bulletins about new books in order to generate interest
- 5) Pamphlets and PA announcements about books to generate interest
- 6) Handmade posters and book related crafts on display

[4] What do you think is a good way to elevate understanding of picture books?

- 1) Make picture books a topic of discussion in communiques with parents
- 2) Promote reading of picture books through a special reading group of parents and children
- 3) A picture book reading week
- 4) A specific time set aside for story telling time
- 5) Sustained silent reading time
- 6) Other

[5] Before you actually discover the contents of a picture book, what aspect of the book are you most interested in viewing?

- 1) Color and design of the book cover
- 2) Title
- 3) Author
- 4) Publisher
- 5) A pop-up or paper fold-out book
- 6) Pocket sized book, or one with an unusual binding
- 7) Size of letters, layout of text
- 8) Construction (plastic pages, cloth, ridged pages, paper)
- 9) Other

[6] What sort of illustrations in picture books do you find appealing?

- 1) One that leaves you feeling warm and friendly
- 2) One that is surrealistic
- 3) Ones that are drawn to specifically suit children's tastes
- 4) One that has artistic quality
- 5) One that is comical or humorous
- 6) One that visually suits the story
- 7) Other

[7] What sort of text is desirable?

- 1) One that is warmhearted and funny

- 2) One that is fun to read aloud
- 3) One that increases a student's vocabulary or other language skills
- 4) One that utilizes repetition
- 5) One that has a catchy rhythm and cadence
- 6) One that uses dialect and jargon
- 7) Font, size and shape of the letters
- 8) Other

[8] With regards to educational value, what method do you used to interest students in picture books?

- 1) Reading (aloud) for listening purposes
- 2) A picture-story show
- 3) One that emphasizes creativity and originality
- 4) A dramatization of true events
- 5) Slides, video, other audio visual aids
- 6) Other

[9] What do you think about letting students borrow picture books?

- 1) On a regular basis
- 2) Sometimes
- 3) There is no demand for borrowing books
- 4) There is no framework for borrowing books
- 5) Only from the school library
- 6) Other

For question [10] through [19] below, choose only one from these six answers to respond to each question.

- 1) Always
- 2) Fairly often
- 3) With equal regularity
- 4) Seldom
- 5) Never
- 6) Unknown

[10] When choosing a picture book, the importance you assign to the quality of pictures themselves is the deciding factor.

- [11] When choosing a picture book, the importance you assign to the quality of the text is the deciding factor.
- [12] When choosing a picture book, you act on the recommendation that the book has received , and its popularity as the deciding factor.
- [13] When deciding on the subject matter, you choose well-known fables, myths, and fairy tales.
- [14] When deciding the subject matter, you choose according to its content as related to subject area being taught at the time.
- [15] When deciding on the subject matter, you choose according to the emotional and social level of the child and the book's ability to portray the world realistically.
- [16] When deciding on the subject matter, you choose according to the enriching ideas and creations in the books.
- [17] When deciding on the subject matter, you choose according to its humanistic value, and ability to stir one's feelings.
- [18] When deciding on the subject matter, you choose according to what it has to say about the human condition, and moral values.
- [19] When deciding on the subject matter, you choose according to its ability to speak to one's daily conduct, and imbue one with a sense of morality as applied to one's own life style.

REFLECTING ON THE IMPORTANCE OF PICTURE BOOKS

For questions [20] to [27] below, choose only one answer from these six answers to respond to each question.

- 1) Unequivocally true
- 2) Probably true
- 3) No generalization possible--sometimes true, sometimes false
- 4) Probably false
- 5) Absolutely false
- 6) Don't know

- [20] Children should be made to read picture books on a great variety of topics.

- [21] In order for children to enjoy picture books, one would suppose they must like reading as well.
- [22] Its best to have children read books of the best quality repeatedly, even if there are not many, than to have them read many of average quality.
- [23] If a student masters how to read or recognize words through a picture book, he should be encouraged to quickly move on to books of higher reading levels.
- [24] Students should not be reading picture books only in kindergarten and at the elementary school level, but also at higher grade levels.
- [25] It's not as easy to feel comfortable with a foreign book as a domestic one.
- [26] Parents and teachers like their children to be exposed to foreign cultures through picture books.
- [27] Picture books from other countries have better composition and are more interesting than domestic ones.